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ABSTRACT

The 1983-84 school year marks the second year of the Seattle Public Schools' operation of a re-entry program for students who are otherwise likely to be lost in the educational system. The program is designed to serve students in Grades 7-12 who have been suspended or expelled from the regular middle or high school program during 1983-84. To prepare students for return to a regular academic environment, the objectives for the re-entry program focus on student behavior rather than academics. An outreach/intake services unit is included to reduce the work burden of the regular program staff. Program operation is geared to accommodate a student body that gradually increases in size throughout the course of a semester, and students are assigned to one of three re-entry program sites, according to residence address. Following the description of the program's operation, the program evaluation design is presented. And finally, two questionnaires are appended: "Teachers' Rating of Student at Entrance," and "Student Intake/Entrance." (KH)

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A RE-ENTRY PROGRAM FOR STUDENTS WHO HAVE BEEN SUSPENDED OR EXPELLED FROM SCHOOL

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SEATTLE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Paper presented at the annual meeting
of the American Education Research Association

April 1984

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A RE-ENTRY PROGRAM FOR STUDENTS WHO HAVE BEEN SUSPENDED OR EXPELLED FROM SCHOOL

INTRODUCTION

The 1983-84 school year marks the second year of the Seattle Public Schools' operation of a re-entry program for students who are otherwise likely to be lost to the educational system. The program is designed to serve students in grades 7-12 who have been suspended or expelled from the regular middle or high school program during the 1983-84 school year. The objectives of this paper are two-fold:

1. To document the re-entry program's operation, the process by which it attempts to help students achieve expected behavioral outcomes.

2. To present the design for evaluating the program's effectiveness in enabling students to achieve the expected outcomes.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Objectives

Program objectives. Objectives for the re-entry program focus on student behaviors rather than on academics. It was the consensus of the previous year's program staff that unless the program addressed specific behavior problems, students would be unprepared for return to a regular academic environment. The behavior problems selected for attention are implied in the re-entry program's stated objectives. These objectives, or expected student outcomes, are as follows:

1. The student will improve attendance.
2. The student will be able to stay in his/her own space during class time.
3. The student will be able to listen to the person who is speaking without any interruptions.
4. The student will develop self-control behaviors during group discussions.
5. The student will be able to communicate his/her feelings in an appropriate manner.
6. The student will use his problem solving ability for dealing with social/behavioral conflicts.
7. The student will develop the ability to foresee consequences for his/her actions.

Outreach/Intake Services objectives. The outreach/intake services unit of the re-entry program was established to perform services that, in the preceding year's operation of the program, fell to an already overburdened program staff. The nature of these services is summarized in the outreach/intake unit's two stated objectives:

1. By the end of the school year, the outreach/intake services unit will have made pursuit contact with 95% of the students and/or parents of students eligible for re-entry program enrollment during the 1983-84 school year.

2. By the end of the school year, the outreach/intake services unit will have facilitated re-entry program attendance and follow-through services for 60% of those students on long-term suspension or expulsion during the 1983-84 school year.

Operation

Program operation. Operation of the re-entry program is geared to accommodate a student body that gradually increases in size throughout the course of a semester. There are few students in attendance at the beginning of the semester, but their number increases steadily as students are suspended or expelled from the regular program. The re-entry student body reaches maximum size just prior to the end of the semester; most students exit the program at semester's end.

There are three re-entry program sites to which students are assigned geographically, based on residence address. The three sites, labeled herein as A, B, and C, differ considerably in the number of students they serve. Site A serves the largest number of students (160 at the end of last semester). Site B serves the next largest number (90 at last semester's end), and Site C serves the smallest number of students (50 at semester's end). The three sites also differ in several aspects of their operation. Four of these aspects are discussed below.

- Mainstreaming. Two of the three sites, A and C, have an alternative (individualized progress program) high school into which re-entry program students are mainstreamed. At Site A, those students whose behavior is judged to be suitable spend at least half the school day in alternative high school classes; at Site C, most students spend all but one period a day in alternative high school classes. At Site B, the re-entry program is self-contained.

- Seventh and eighth grade students. Seventh and eighth grade students have presented a special problem at Sites A and C because many of these students are unable to handle the greater freedom provided by the alternative school environment. Staff at the two sites note that acting out and modeling of inappropriate behavior are particular problems with these younger students. Such problems were not notable at Site B, where seventh and eighth grade students' classes are self-contained within an already self-contained re-entry program.

- Behavior modification. Staff at all three sites have had some, and in many individual cases considerable, training in behavior modification techniques. The technique most used is referred to alternately as skill streaming or structured learning.* The three sites differ in the

* In skill streaming, or structured learning, each of a group of students is videotaped while working through a hypothetical problem situation requiring a skill such as temper control, trouble avoidance, or positive negotiation. The exercises are structured so that the student must acknowledge responsibility for his/her own actions.

amount of student time formally scheduled for skill streaming. Site B students have the least amount of time formally set aside for skill streaming, one class period three days a week. Site C students have one class period a day set aside for skill streaming activities. Site A revised its curriculum at midyear so that for a beginning re-entry student, a sizable portion of the school day is spent in behavior modification activities including, but not limited to, skill streaming; when the student is judged ready, he/she is mainstreamed into the alternative high school program, or, in the case of seventh and eighth graders, into "academic mini-courses."

- Academics. Students at all three sites have the opportunity to earn academic credits while in the re-entry program. At Sites A and C, credits are earned primarily through courses taken in the alternative high school. At Site B, the re-entry program courses are those required in the regular middle or senior high school. Since students enter the program at all times during a semester, many receive only partial credit for their re-entry program coursework.

Outreach/Intake Services operation. Transcripts and other information, including reason for suspension, are routinely passed on to the outreach/intake services unit shortly after students are suspended. Outreach/intake action on expelled students takes longer since these students must first petition for re-entry and await administrative approval of their petition. In either case, outreach/intake services begin when records are received on a suspended or expelled student. At that point unit staff contact the eligible student to arrange a re-entry orientation appointment.

Orientation activities include describing the re-entry program, outlining expectations for student behavior while in the re-entry program, explaining criteria for transfer back into the regular program, and administering a locus of control scale.

Shortly before the semester's end, outreach/intake services unit staff meet with students who are eligible for transfer back into the regular program. At this meeting, unit staff describe procedures for transfer back into the regular program and, for as many students as possible, arrange contact with receiving school counselors. Also, the locus of control scale is again administered at this meeting.

The outreach/intake services unit staff also follow up on students on an "as needed" basis, after their return to the regular program. Follow-up activities include phone calls, visits, meetings, and, where necessary, referrals to special agencies.

EVALUATION DESIGN

Program Effectiveness

Issues. The original evaluation issue concerning program effectiveness was whether or not the entire program is successful in achieving the stated objectives. However, classroom observation and interviews with staff at the three sites clearly showed that there are three distinct re-entry programs. Thus, the evaluation focus has become that of determining whether the three operations are differentially successful in achieving the objectives. Also, since seventh and eighth grade students present more or less of a problem, depending on site, a corollary issue is whether the three operations are differentially successful with seventh and eighth grade students.

A third issue related to program effectiveness is whether students' length of stay in the program is correlated with their progress in achieving program objectives. Both the nature and magnitude of the relationship, if any, between length of stay in the program and degree of behavioral improvement are of interest. Such a relationship might be positive and linear, or it might be curvilinear, as in the case where no further improvement occurs beyond a given period of time. Moreover, the relationship might be different for the different sites and for the different grade levels.

Finally there is the likelihood that behavioral improvement is as much (or more) a function of student characteristics as it is of program properties. If this is the case, relevant student characteristics (e.g., ethnic group membership, family structure--both parents versus single parents, economic status, whether suspended or expelled, etc.) should be identified and, in order to infer differential program effectiveness, controlled in the statistical analyses that compare the three sites.

Methodology. Two aspects of the methodology to be used to address the above issues, assessment procedures and method of analysis, are discussed below.

- Assessment. Teacher rating scales have been constructed to measure student progress toward achievement of the first six objectives listed in the Program Objectives section of this paper.* The teacher rating scales are completed by program teachers twice for each student; first, when the student has been in the program for two weeks and second, just before the student exits the program. (See Appendix A for a copy of the teacher ratings scales.)

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* A series of similar scales has been constructed by Agard and Harrison (1977). Some of their scale items were adapted and combined with newly created items to construct the teacher ratings scales.

Nowicki's and Strickland's Locus of Control Scale for grades 7-12 (1972), a measure of the degree to which an individual internalizes responsibility for his/her own actions and their consequences, is used to measure student progress toward achievement of the seventh objective listed in the Program Objectives section of this paper. The scale may be scored for either internality or externality of locus of control. The locus of control scale is first completed by students during the pre-program orientation and assessment session conducted by the outreach/intake services unit. Students complete the scale a second time just before exiting the program. (See Appendix B for a copy of the locus of control scale.)

- Analyses. A 3 by 2 analysis of covariance design will be used to address the issues of differential program effectiveness among the three sites and differential effectiveness with seventh and eighth grade students. The two independent variables will be site, with three levels, A, B, and C, and grade, with two levels 7-8 and 9-12.

  The dependent variables will be exit scores on item clusters of the teacher rating scales and the exit internality score from the locus of control scale. Covariate adjustment will be made for entrance scores on the dependent variable measures as well as for those measures of student characteristics that correlate with the dependent variables.

  To address the issue of whether students' length of stay in the program is related to their progress in achieving program objectives, both correlation and eta coefficients will be computed for each grade level by site combination. The variables to be correlated will be number of days in the program and the residualized (on entrance scores) exit scores on the teacher rating scales and the locus of control scale. Residual scores rather than simple gain scores will be used to avoid the well documented problems associated with the latter.

Outreach/Intake Services Effectiveness

Issue. The evaluation issue regarding outreach/intake services unit effectiveness is whether the unit is successful in achieving its two objectives, as stated in the Outreach/Intake Services Objectives section of this paper.

Methodology. Whether the unit is achieving its two objectives can be determined by referring to the reports it publishes. These monthly reports give the number and type of contacts made with suspended/expelled students, the number of students assigned to the re-entry program, and the number of follow-up contacts with students who have returned to the regular program. These figures can be compared with suspension/expulsion data stored on central computer files to determine whether the percentages stated in the two objectives are achieved.

Post-Program Effectiveness

Issues. Three issues need to be addressed in the evaluation of post-program effectiveness. These issues are summarized in the following evaluation questions:

1. Given that improvement in student behavior is exhibited over the course of the re-entry program, is the improvement maintained after return to the regular program?

2. Does the re-entry program promote student academic improvement?

3. Is the re-entry program successful in preventing recidivism?

Methodology. A 3 by 2 by 2 analysis of covariance design will be used to address the question of post-program maintenance of behavioral improvement. A random sample of re-entry students will be assessed on the teacher rating scales and the locus of control scale for a third time, while back in the regular program. The three independent variables will be site, grade level and a repeated measures factor, time of administration--on exit and on post-program follow-up. The dependent variables will be scores on item clusters of the teacher rating scales and the internality score from the locus of control scale. Covariate adjustment will be made for entrance scores on the dependent variable measures as well as for those measures of student characteristics that correlate with the dependent variables.

The question of post-program improvement in academics will be addressed by means of a 4 by 2 analysis of covariance design. The levels of the first factor will be the three sites plus a fourth level which represents "no program" students, those students who return to the regular program without going through the re-entry program. The second factor will again be grade level. The dependent variable will be number of credits earned as of the end of the first semester of the 1984-85 school year. Covariate adjustment will be made for number of credits earned as of the end of first semester of the 1983-84 school year as well as for those student characteristic measures that correlate with the dependent variable.

The recidivism question will be addressed via the same basic design as that described above for the academics question. The major difference is that the dependent variable will be a measure of whether or not the student subjects are suspended or expelled (again) during the first semester of 1984-85. Among the covariates will be a measure of whether not the student has a prior history of suspension/expulsion.

It is hoped that on completion of these follow-through evaluation activities, documentation will be sufficient to provide a model that can be used by other school districts to "retrieve" students who are otherwise likely to be lost to the educational system.

REFERENCES

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Nowicki, S., Jr. and B.R. Strickland. A locus of control scale for children. Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 1972.

APPENDIX A

TEACHER RATING OF STUDENT AT ENTRANCE

TEACHER RATING OF STUDENT AT ENTRANCE

Student Name _____ Student I.D.# _____(1-7) Date _____ (8-13)

	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	
1. Shows up for school.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5	(14)
2. Is on time for class.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5	(15)
3. Stays in his/her own space during class time.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5	(16)
4. Obeys class limits or rules.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5	(17)
5. Is boisterous, shows off in class.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5	(18)
6. Listens to teacher without interrupting.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5	(19)
7. Listens to other students without interrupting.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5	(20)
8. Can concentrate on tasks for long periods.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5	(21)
9. Is self-controlled during group discussions.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5	(22)
10. Gets into fights.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5	(23)
11. Is easily provoked by other class members.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5	(24)
12. Resists others' efforts to reason with him/her.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5	(25)
13. Deals rationally and reasonably with social-behavioral conflicts	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5	(26)
14. Communicates his/her feelings in an appropriate manner.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5	(27)
15. Has trouble expressing feelings appropriately.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5	(28)
16. Is well behaved in class.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5	(29)
17. Attempts to dominate or bully other students.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5	(30)
18. Has difficulty keeping his/her mind on group discussions.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5	(31)
19. Seems to like school.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5	(32)

Please use the space below for any comments that may bear on your ratings.

Distribution: White - Program Evaluation Office; Yellow - Student's File.

APPENDIX B

STUDENT ENTRANCE QUESTIONNAIRE

STUDENT INTAKE/ENTRANCE QUESTIONNAIRE

Name _____ (1-7) Date _____ (8-13)

INSTRUCTIONS: First please fill in the space above giving your name and today's date. There are no right or wrong answers to questions that follow. They are designed to get your own reaction to things that happen to you. For each question, just check the "yes" or "no" box, depending on which answer best describes your reaction.

		YES	NO	
1.	Do you believe that most problems will solve themselves if you just don't fool with them?	☐ 1	☐ 2	(14)
2.	Are you often blamed for things that just aren't your fault?	☐ 1	☐ 2	(15)
3.	Do you feel that most of the time it doesn't pay to try hard because things never turn out right anyway?	☐ 1	☐ 2	(16)
4.	Do you feel that most of the time parents/guardians listen to what their children have to say?	☐ 1	☐ 2	(17)
5.	When you get punished does it usually seem its for no good reason at all?	☐ 1	☐ 2	(18)
6.	Most of the time do you find it hard to change a friend's (mind) opinion?	☐ 1	☐ 2	(19)
7.	Do you feel that it's nearly impossible to change your parent's/guardian's mind about anything?	☐ 1	☐ 2	(20)
8.	Do you feel that when you do something wrong there's very little you can do to make it right?	☐ 1	☐ 2	(21)
9.	Do you believe that most kids are just born good at sports?	☐ 1	☐ 2	(22)
10.	Do you feel that one of the best ways to handle most problems is just not to think about them?	☐ 1	☐ 2	(23)
11.	Do you feel that when a kid your age decides to hit you, there's little you can do to stop him or her?	☐ 1	☐ 2	(24)
12	Have you felt that when people were mean to you it was usually for no reason at all?	☐ 1	☐ 2	(25)
13.	Most of the time, do you feel that you can change what might happen tomorrow by what you do today?	☐ 1	☐ 2	(26)
14.	Do you believe that when bad things are going to happen they just are going to happen no matter what you try to do to stop them?	☐ 1	☐ 2	(27)
15.	Most of the time do you find it useless to try to get your own way at home?	☐ 1	☐ 2	(28)
16.	Do you feel that when somebody your age wants to be your enemy there's little you can do to change matters?	☐ 1	☐ 2	(29)
17.	Do you usually feel that you have little to say about what you get to eat at home?	☐ 1	☐ 2	(30)
18.	Do you feel that when someone doesn't like you there's little you can do about it?	☐ 1	☐ 2	(31)
19.	Do you usually feel that it's almost useless to try in school because most other children are just plain smarter than you are?	☐ 1	☐ 2	(32)
20.	Are you the kind of person who believes that planning ahead makes things turn out better?	☐ 1	☐ 2	(33)
21.	Most of the time, do you feel that you have little to say about what your family decides to do?	☐ 1	☐ 2	(34)
22.	Did you like the school you last attended?	☐ 1	☐ 2	(35)

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